The Unitarian Christian

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EDITORIAL

No day in our calendar has manifested so marked an ability to stand on its own feet and not only win but hold the affectionate loyalty of human hearts as Christmas Day. It makes little difference whether a man worships Manitou, Brahma, Zeus, Allah, or God, introduce him to Christmas and he will accept it, love it, and observe it with the last ounce of his sincerity. Few people have been so ferociously intense in their religious beliefs and scruples as our own Puritan ancestors. They were resolved to pay no attention to Christmas Day, because they would have no connection whatever with the objectionable practices of the "unpurified" Church of England. They considered it their religious duty to hate those customs more than they loved Christmas. But they soon discovered their mistake. Christmas, its message, its spirit, its beauty, its appeal to all that was gentlest and sweetest in their own natures, wore them down, and showed them that as a simple matter of fact they loved Christmas far more than they hated the Establishment. They had to surrender.

So long as a man can say: "Humanus sum," he will have to surrender to Christmas. He may neither know nor care what it means, whose birth it celebrates, why it should be observed; he may dread its coming, he may deplore its excitement and extravagance, he may even exploit it with all his ingenuity to make a lot of money, but in spite of himself he will love it.

Such a man was once wheedled by his little daughter to take her to the Christmas party her Sunday School was giving. He scoffed and grunted, and under his breath muttered sundry profane remarks, but it was his precious little daughter and he could not refuse. When it came time to go home his daughter found him seated in a corner with the tears streaming down his face.

All of which would seem to indicate that in a very real sense Christ has overcome the world. We are living in a Christian age, as members of a Christian civilization. What is the sense in saying "I am not a Christian," when on every hand every moment of the day we are surrounded by little amenities, securities, graces, considerations, courtesies, justices, kindnesses, helps, generosities which we have learned to expect, on which we have grown to depend, and every one of which crept into the world on that first Christmas night; and have ever since multiplied and spread all over the world to change the entire complexion of human life.

Suppose then that for Christmas time at least we forget all about the *Unitarian Register* which is no longer Christian. For the joke is really on the man who says he has no use for Christianity. He is one himself. He can't help it.

C. E. P.

A Peace Hymn

Eugene R. Shippen

The war-torn world cries out for balm and healing;
From fear the threatened nations seek release;
Now open, Lord, our eyes, to us revealing
The higher way to brotherhood and peace.

Yea, Lord, if so it be thy holy pleasure,
Let war, our cup of sorrow, pass from us.
We pray for peace whose worth no man can measure,
Promising man an era glorious.

All-loving God, pray, now, bestow thy blessing
On us, thy contrite children, ere we part.
We own our share in wrongs that need redressing;
O, may our world yet show a Christ-like heart.

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What Does Christmas Celebrate?

Irving R. Murray

Irving Murray is minister of the First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh, Pa. This article is a portion of his thoughtful Christmas message to the parents and children of his church.

What does Christmas Day celebrate, anyway? Can we answer the question in terms at once broad enough and deep enough to hold meaning for all, regardless of sectarian affiliation? Can we be Catholic enough in our statement of the meaning of Christmas that even our Jewish friends will break bread with us at this feast table? Why not? Jesus was a Jew, and Christmas is, in the first instance, the day when we remember the great difference it has made to the world to have experienced the spiritual leadership of the Nazarene, who himself declared that he came "not to destroy but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets."

Christmas is, however, much more than this. It is our most nearly universal symbol of the deepest, most dearly cherished conviction of all high religion, East or West. God is most fully himself, Christmas says plainly, precisely in human deeds of love and truth and beauty. God does not fully enter the world until Everyman is or aspires to be himself an incarnation of justice, of mercy and of wisdom. The best of man, so declares the symbol, is realized in generous giving, in thoughtful affection. Life reaches its zenith as it gives itself to the best it knows, and this best is not fully real until it has been made a part of all our lives. These are the good tidings of great joy which Christmas brings, as the Gospel itself declares, not just to our church, but to all people.

Clement A. Miles has told the universal meaning of the festival: "Christmas is a microcosm of the world," he declares. "It reflects almost every phase of thought and feeling from crude magic to superstition to the speculative mysticism of Eckhart, from the mere delight in physical indulgence to the exquisite spirituality of St. Francis. . . . Ascetic and bon-vivant, mystic and materialist, learned and simple, and noble and peasant, all have found something in it on which to lay hold. It is a river into which have flowed tributaries from every side, from Oriental religion, from Greek and Roman civilization, from Celtic, Teutonic, Slav and probably pre-Aryan society, all mingling their waters so that it is often hard to discover the far-away springs."

So we might go on—as we hope that with older children parents will go on—to discover and to list the diverse origins of our Christmas customs. Christmas thus celebrates in fact—whether we have known it heretofore or not—Christmas thus celebrates in fact the brotherhood of mankind. We are all of us brought together in this festival of many centuries and many lands. In confirming the particulars of our own interpretation of Christmas, let us not lose sight of this other, all-embracing meaning. In the sayings of Jesus there is no surer clue than this to the spirit in which any day celebrated in his name must be observed. "If . . . thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Let us, then, make sure that Christmas reconciles us to all our brothers, everywhere!

Finally, what of adults? What does Christmas say to us in this difficult time? You may recall Robert Herrick's lines:

> Tell us, thou clear and heavenly tongue,
> Where is the Babe but lately sprung?
> Lies he the lily-pads among?
> Or say if this new Birth of ours
> Sleeps, laid within some ark of flowers,
> Spangled with dew-light; thou canst clear
> All doubts, and manifest the where
> Declare to us, bright star, if we shall seek
> Him in the morning's blushing cheek,
> Or search the beds of spices through,
> To find him out?

The answer, of course, is that he lies not among lily-banks but in straw, not in beds of spices but where animals stamp and low and wait the morning with its pasture and its work. Christmas thus heralds the birth of Christ at a time of turmoil and in a stable, the consummation of life at what seems to be the most inauspicious hour and the least likely setting. Christmas proclaims the highest possibilities in the lowliest places. It is a message to renew our faltering hopes, to stiffen our democratic convictions, to strengthen our will to peace, to re-kindle the devotions of our hearts, our minds and our spirits to the great work of free men, builders of the City wherein all—not just the angels, but all!—shall sing, "Glory to God in the highest! And on earth, peace, peace among men of good will!"

UNITARIANS ARE CHRISTIANS

Some years ago a statue of Edward Everett Hale was unveiled on the Public Gardens in Boston. Among those present to pay tribute to Dr. Hale was the Mayor who was to accept the statue for the city. As he was one of the first speakers, he turned to a young Unitarian minister, sitting beside him, and asked in a stage whisper: "Young man, who on earth was Edward Everett Hale?" The minister replied: "He was a liberal Christian leader, a Unitarian minister; he established a Settlement House in Boston and wrote 'The Man Without a Country.'" The last two statements rang a bell and the Mayor made a pretty fair acceptance speech.

Dr. Hale was a typical Unitarian Christian who showed his Christianity, not because he professed so much, but because he practiced so much of Jesus' teachings in his every-day living.

Four hundred years ago the Diet of Torda established legal toleration and freedom of choice in Southern Europe. It is interesting to note, that at this time Moslem Turkey allowed fuller religious freedom than did so-called Christian-Europe. Dr. Earl Morse Wilbur calls this Diet of 1557 "The Golden Date of Unitarian History." Certainly it was the most advanced and enlightened law passed up to that time in Europe, and Francis David, one of our Unitarian Saints, was largely responsible for it.

These early Unitarians had no wish to become non-Christian but had a consuming desire to become more Christian, through following the teachings and example of Jesus, rather than adhering to conflicting theories ABOUT Jesus.

So today, Unitarians are Christians in the same way that Lutherans, Catholics or Episcopalians are Christians (if they are); not because they believe certain creeds and rituals but because they follow the teachings and example of Jesus. They are Christians who follow "The Way of Jesus," no matter by what denominational label they are tagged. Jesus' only requirement was: "follow me." His only tests were: "by their fruits ye shall know them" and "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples that ye love one another." When his disciples wanted him to be exclusive and rebuke others who preached in his name, Jesus replied: "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold."

One who is striving to be a Christian cannot be exclusive and be a true follower of Jesus. He must recognize truth wherever he finds it and work with all those who are striving for a better world in accordance with the will of God.

So Unitarians are *Universal Christians* who strive for an inclusive fellowship and welcome others, who though they do not call themselves Christians, uphold the universal truths which underlie all high religion.

Unitarians are *Judeo-Christians* who recognize their debt to the Hebrew prophets, thinkers and reformers into whose heritage they have entered.

Unitarians are *Unity Christians* who believe in the Unity of God and the Unity of Man. If they really believe in Unity then they recognize that God is the One God "in whom we live and move and have our being" and that all men are brothers one of another.

The Community Church of New York City seems to many to be carrying out the dream of the Unitarians of long ago of being a bridge over which men of varying religious backgrounds could come together in a common effort for the good of all men. There is a strong universal Christian heritage in the Community Church. In its building is an inter-faith chapel, a memorial to a young Jewish girl; on the altar is a statue of St. Francis, and on the wall next to the memorial tablet is St. Francis' "Canticle to the Sun." It is fittingly called "The Chapel of Peace." In the sanctuary of the church is a bronze bust of Gandhi and the pulpit is the "John Haynes Holmes Pulpit" given by a Hindu in memory of Mahatma Gandhi. The church membership is made up of people of various racial backgrounds and world religions.

This church is carrying on the work of Dr. Charles W. Wendte who, as a former Unitarian leader, did yeoman service to bring a "Larger Fellowship of the Religions of the World." His Centenary Hymn sung at the celebration of the American Unitarian Association in 1925 summarises Unitarian Christianity:

"With high, heroic faith
Our fathers in their day,
The one and only God declared
His Christ the Light, the Way."
"In this memorial hour
Their grateful children name
The One Eternal God, and one
World-Brotherhood proclaim."

What About Humanism?

Kenneth R. Warren

The average Unitarian of our time has a problem. Although we are a fellowship of individualists, I think there is such a thing as an average Unitarian. It would be a person who is fairly representative of the majority of Unitarians and who probably could be described theologically as a non-dogmatic Christian. This average Unitarian of today, if he is at all interested in the affairs of his denomination, faces a serious problem. The problem has to do with what we call humanism.

There is within our fellowship a way of thinking and a way of living which goes by the name humanism. Its adherents we call humanists. No completely accurate description of humanism and humanists can be given, because there are many of them, and there are many different points of view all called by that one name. But, in general, humanism is an emphasis on humanity. The feeling of the Humanists is that, as we are human beings, and as our most important concern ought to be ourselves and other human beings, our religious thinking ought to center around man. Man and the opportunities and challenges of human life here and now should be matters of primary interest, according to humanists. In general, it is an emphasis on man. But often it is more than that. Humanists, like anyone else, sometimes go to extremes; its extreme form is a denial of the existence of God. Some of them are simply indifferent to the thought of God, and some of them take the uncompromising stand that there is no God. Some of them are indifferent to the life and teachings of Jesus, have very little use for the Bible, take no interest or confidence in the concept of immortality, do not wish to be identified or associated with other Christian churches, and see morality not as divine law but as expediency, all because a part of their religious philosophy is a denial of the existence of God.

Humanism in one form or another has existed for centuries. It came into our denomination in the late 1800's. It grew very gradually and very quietly. By the 1930's it had gained considerable strength, and at that time a number of Unitarian ministers signed and published a "Humanist Manifesto," which was a clear statement of frankly humanistic beliefs. Ever since then it has occupied a prominent place in our denominational life.

It occupies a prominent place today in our fellowship. Some of our churches are humanist churches. Their services of worship are prepared so that in the readings, in the sermon, in the meditation (which takes the place of prayer) there is very little if any mention of God; the emphasis is entirely on man. They are similar to Ethical Culture Societies, organized on the assumption that there is no God. Some of our ministers are humanist. Many of the men who signed the Humanist Manifesto are still active. Some of them emphasize man to the virtual exclusion of God. Some of them use the word "God" but mean by it something quite different from our understanding of a Supreme Being. A few openly deny God. Some of our denominational leadership is humanist. Some of the men and women who hold offices in our national and regional associations are humanists. Their personal convictions are humanist, and they work on the assumption that the entire denomination eventually will be humanist. Humanism looms large in modern Unitarianism. It is a small percentage of our people who are humanist, but their influence is much greater than their number would indicate. Humanism is a prominent factor in our denomination.

So our average Unitarian has a problem. He is uneasy about having with him in the same church and in the same denomination people who deny or hesitate to affirm the existence of God. He is more than uneasy, he is definitely upset, when these people control the group to such an extent that their views are taken by the general public to be the views of all Unitarians, and when they use the authority of their offices to push the entire Unitarian fellowship toward humanism. I know from personal acquaintance with friends in all sections of the country that many of our people are seriously troubled by this situation.

This has gone on for a number of years. All through those years people have continued to be troubled. The problem continues to exist. There are endless discussions and any number of attempts at a solution, but we continually fail to solve the problem. We have been unable to solve it, because as soon as you attempt a solution, you immediately find that you are caught on the horns of a dilemma. You have a choice between two alternatives and both of them are wrong. You turn this way, and you are caught on one horn. You turn the other way, and you are caught on the other horn. There seems to be no way out. Our average Unitarian is committed to two fundamental beliefs. He believes in freedom. He believes in God. He is convinced that freedom of belief is the right of every human being and of every church member. He also believes that there is a God and that the purpose of the church

is to worship God. Both beliefs are fundamental in his faith. If he forces the humanists out of our fellowship, he is turning against his belief in freedom. If he does not, he seems to be turning against his belief in God. One alternative would seem to take from him his freedom; the other apparently takes from him his God. He does not wish to give up either one. Both are vitally important elements of his faith. He would not wish to surrender the freedom it has taken us so long to achieve; he would not care to dismiss the thought of God which historically has been the central doctrine of our faith. We are between two fires. Either direction seems to lead to the destruction of one of our most precious convictions. Both alternatives seem wrong, so no solution has been found. It sometimes looks as though our average Unitarian will remain forever suspended and impaled on the horns of the dilemma.

I have to offer what I think is a workable solution, what I believe is the only solution consistent with the principles of our free faith. My answer, although it would be rather difficult to carry out, is quite simple in theory; and I think it would solve the whole problem and settle this constantly recurring issue. My answer comes in two parts.

Part One is: keep our freedom. I believe we ought at all costs to maintain our individual freedom of belief. This means, of course, that we would continue to have humanists in our fellowship. I would not try to expel them from the denomination. I would not wish to see any attempt, direct or indirect, made to exclude them from our churches. To set up some kind of creed which would force them out, or to discourage them in more subtle ways, either would be wrong. I think we should continue to receive our humanist friends and co-workers into our fellowship.

I have a number of reasons for this. One is that most of them are not as radical and heretical as you might think. While some deny the existence of God, most of them are not so dogmatic. They simply do not feel qualified to deny or to affirm. They are not atheists; they are what we might call reverent agnostics. It would seem too bad to shut them out for failing to accept that one belief, when there are many other beliefs to which they whole-heartedly agree.

Another reason is that some of our most capable people are humanists. Some of our most active workers and dedicated leaders would be lost to the Unitarian movement if we excluded humanism.

Furthermore, humanism is valuable to us, because it serves as a healthy antidote to the kind of theism that involves itself in endless arguments about trivial points of theology and induces a blissful indifference to the responsibilities of living in the here and the now.

Also, I would not wish to exclude humanism, because that would mean that we do not feel capable of defending our theistic beliefs. When we do not allow a subject to be debated openly and democratically, it means that we are afraid of losing the debate, that we lack the confidence of our convictions. If we are reluctant to allow humanism and theism to meet within our churches, it must mean that we are afraid that theism would lose. If the only argument we have is to slam the door and refuse to admit other points of view, apparently we do not think that our belief in God is strong enough to withstand opposition. To rule out humanism would be to confess the spiritual bankruptcy of theism, and I am not ready to do that.

Still another reason is that it is important to have in the American family of churches and denominations at least one which is open to everybody. To keep our doors open to any and all who care to enter, and so to provide a church home for people who otherwise would have no choice but to remain outside the influence of any religion: this is a valuable and unique service to the cause of religion in America.

There are many reasons for retaining our freedom. But the most important is simply that I think we ought to believe in freedom, complete individual freedom. Whether anyone else does or not, whether it is practical or not, whether it is popular or not, we ought to be dedicated and to stay dedicated to unlimited freedom of religious belief.

So I think that we should have humanists in our denomination and in our churches, not allow them or permit or tolerate them, but welcome them as respected and valued members in good standing.

Let us keep our freedom, and therefore continue to include humanists. This is Part One of my answer.

Part Two is: let us also keep our belief in God. Let us believe that there is a God, a living God, who is, not was, "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Let us have a faith that is "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen," a faith that there is pervading this vast universe a Cosmic Friend to all the sons of men, a Heavenly Father whose presence reaches into the life of every one of His children, guiding, loving, and caring for them, now and through all eternity. Let us believe in God.

And let us say and show that we believe in God. Let us express our conviction, within our fellowship and outside our fellowship, in what we say and in the way we live, let people know that this is our conviction. Let everyone, inside and out-

side the denomination, know that to us and to the majority of Unitarians belief in God is an important article of faith. In everything you say and do, let it be known that we believe in God and that we think this belief is important.

When we are engaged in the work of our parishes, devising forms of worship, explaining our convictions to newcomers and presenting our beliefs to the public, selecting Sunday School material, giving guidance to youth groups, let us make it clear that God is fundamental in our faith. When we are choosing our religious leaders, calling a minister, appointing conference officers, electing the officials who run our national associations, then let us keep our convictions in mind. When we are involved directly or indirectly in denominational work, publishing books and pamphlets, conducting advertising campaigns, editing educational material, helping in the growth of new churches, when we are actually assisting in such work or merely electing the persons who do it, we should make it quite clear that we believe in God, that we wish to be represented as a fellowship of believers. We should not be hesitant or reluctant to state our convictions and, more than state them, we should put them to work in our religious affairs.

If we would do this, the public would see that, while Unitarianism embraces all kinds of beliefs and opinions, it is predominantly a fellowship of persons who believe in God. If we would do this, our leadership would be predominantly theist. Most Unitarians are theist. If we all were interested and active in the work of our denomination, the simple principle of majority rule would ensure theist officers and officials. Automatically, the number of humanists at headquarters would be in approximate proportion to the number of humanists in our churches. If everyone is interested and active, the leadership inevitably will reflect the views of the rank and file. So if we express our beliefs, our leaders will be men and women who believe in God, and the future of Unitarianism will be one of constantly increasing confidence in the God of our fathers.

This is my answer. Let us maintain our allegiance to both of the basic convictions that have made our faith a glorious heritage. Let us retain our belief in freedom. Let us retain our belief in God. Then we shall have, not freedom from God, but freedom under God. And the Unitarian faith, which has meant so much to our forefathers and to us, which has contributed so much to religion in America, will continue to bless the generations to come with a liberal and undogmatic but clear and firm faith in Almighty God.

Report on the General Conference

A fairly representative cross-section of our churches in the U. S. and Canada attended the Atlantic City Conference the last week-end in October.

One of the most important actions was the majority vote favoring a "Statement of Clarification" presented by the President of the A. U. A. and strongly supported by the All Souls Church of New York City. Because of the misinterpretation of the press of the changing of the name of the official journal from *The Christian Register* to the *Unitarian Register,* this statement was presented to make clear that Unitarians do not repudiate "the Christian origins and traditions which they have held and cherished throughout their history." This statement reaffirmed the declaratory resolution printed in the preamble to the Association's by-laws which says in part, that the purposes are to:

1. Diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man.

2. Strengthen the churches and fellowships which unite in the Association for more and better work for the Kingdom of God.

It lists other purposes and adds: "Nothing in these purposes shall be construed as an authoritative test," which is good Unitarianism.

The General Conference voted to go ahead with raising $4,000,000 for a Unitarian Development Fund. It agreed to employ a Director to carry out these plans.

The Joint-Commission on Merger of Unitarianism and Universalism reported that studies are being made relative to eventual merger but that they are not far enough along to announce the next steps to be taken.

An unofficial luncheon attracted between thirty and forty to discuss how to make the General Conference more significant and to see that time is allowed to discuss denominational problems. All shades of opinion in our Fellowship were represented and all participated in the lively and very serious discussion of denominational needs. It was decided to form a "Committee of Correspondence on Unitarian Concerns," comments, suggestions and questions may be addressed to the Committee in care of the Community Church of New York, 40 East 35th St., N. Y. 16, N. Y.

P. H. C.

The Lord's Free People

Preached at the Union Thanksgiving Day Service of Back Bay Churches, 1957

Without knowing it, that little band of one hundred and four young men and women whom we call the original Mayflower Company, have left for our consideration one or two lessons which we cannot afford to forget or over-look. One is the lesson in religious sincerity; another is the lesson in courage; still another is the lesson in religious consistency.

No Thanksgiving Day ever dawns without inciting some unfortunate soul to protest: "My year has been a year of failure, sorrow, and frustration. What have I to give thanks for?" If they would think a little they would have to admit that no Thanksgiving Day ever dawns upon us void of its own imperishable and indestructible reasons for everybody's gratitude. Those reasons are inherent in the historical texture of the Day. A brief glance at that particular moment of history will enable all of us to recognize those reasons, and to agree to their compelling force.

When that angry Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, nailed his ninety-five theses on the church door in Wittenberg, in the year 1517, he was doing no more than publishing his personal protest against certain malpractices of his church. He intended nothing more than to call his church's attention to those abuses. He expected nothing more than the church's prompt correction of those abuses.

He was the most astonished man in Germany when he found that his action had instigated a formidable revolt against Rome. About half the population of France and the German States, virtually the entire population of Poland, Scandinavia, and the Low Countries were participants in this revolt, and became constituents in the so-called Protestant Reformation. Strange to say, it was full seventeen years later that England made her first reaction to this great event. In the year 1534 King Henry VIII, for his own private reasons, issued his Act of Supremacy, affirming that the King of England is the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England. This of course is the moment referred to by the poet Thomas Gray as the moment

> When love could teach a monarch to be wise,
> And Gospel Light first dawned from Bullen's eyes.

This Act of Supremacy was a purely political technicality: a repudiation of the authority of the Pope, and a declaration of the sole authority of the King of England over the Church of England. In all other respects there was no change. The Church of England remained a detail in the political fabric of England. The King could appoint whomsoever he chose as one of his two Archbishops, as one of his twenty-six bishops, even as a priest of an ordinary country parish. He was under no compulsion to appoint men truly fitted for their religious duties—learned, thoughtful, God-fearing men, sincerely devoted to the spiritual welfare of their people. The tacit assumption was that the King would, of his own sense of decency, appoint suitable men to these church offices. But if the King found that he could reward a faithful political henchman, or could bribe a man of ability to become his faithful political henchman, by appointing him as bishop of a vacant diocese, or as priest of a large rich parish, there was nothing to prevent his doing so.

Nor did this Act of Supremacy make any difference at first in matters of theological thought or belief; or in the pattern of worship; or in the sacramental theory of worship. The Mass, the Confessional, the vestments, the candles, and incense, and bells, and genuflections, the perfunctory reading, the unintelligible liturgy and prayers, the rosaries, and penances, and pardons, and indulgences, all the details and symbolisms that add so much color to the pageantry of worship—these things were dear to the bulk of the people, and were carried right on as though there had been no break with Rome.

But the trouble is that with most people the sacramental theory tends to make worship superficial, just a mysterious manipulation of magical forces that requires nothing at all from the worshipper except his bodily presence. It is not something that he does but only something that is done to him.

We have a new word, a compound word, that we have been frequently using these past few weeks: the fall-out. It is too recent to be found in any dictionary. We know well enough what it means. When an atom bomb is exploded on our testing grounds out west, no one is injured by the explosion itself, which takes place far up in the sky; but from that explosion there comes this fall-out, a cloud of invisible dust-particles each one heavily charged with radio-activity. This cloud drifts slowly down to earth. If some of those radio-active particles happen to light on a human being, he suffers a serious injury, perhaps a fatal one. And of course it makes no difference who that person is, or what he is doing.

Now the sacramental theory of worship affirms that when Mass is said in a properly consecrated church, the result is a sort of beneficial fall-out of invisible particles of spiritual dust, each particle heavily charged with Divine Grace. That

cloud of sacred dust settles upon the congregation and sanctifies each one. It matters not who reads the Missal or how he reads it; it matters not who comes to church, or how he behaves in church. He may be wholly inattentive, unresponsive, indifferent, or even down-right irreverent. Nothing is expected of the worshipper save his actual presence. He may laugh and chat with his neighbors; or move around and greet other friends. So long as he is within those four walls and under that roof when Mass is said, that blessed fall-out of Divine Grace includes him and sanctifies him.

Out of these elements we can paint our picture of religious conditions prevailing in sixteenth century England: a church at the mercy of the political forces of the time; her servants, priests and bishops, too often appointed not because they were personally qualified for their sacred office, but for political considerations; a highly liturgical service of worship embellished with countless colorful details whose symbolisms were far above people's comprehension, and rattled off in a shamelessly perfunctory fashion by ministers who frequently did not know what they themselves were saying; a restless, noisy, uncomprehending congregation, inattentive, unresponsive, even irreverent in demeanor; and a theory of worship that made it far too easy for the sinner to find pardon and remission for his sins, and far too unnecessary for him to attempt anything like a personal moral reform.

Glancing at this sorry picture we cannot be surprised to learn that a class of people appeared in England at just about this time—the middle of the sixteenth century—who were disgusted and horrified at the state of things. They were not a small class but a formidable percentage of the population. They grew rapidly in numbers and determination. The Church of England was corrupt from top to bottom; it must be purified in all its parts, in its constitution and government, in its articles of belief, in its theory and manner of worship. These were of course the Puritans.

But the Puritans were the staunchest of patriots, loyal citizens of England, and resolved to remain so: utterly loyal to both the Crown and the Church of England. Therefore their watchword became: Reformation, yes; but "reformation from within." We ourselves must employ our own lawful methods, and reform our own Church in our own proper fashion. No matter how long it takes, the reform must be made through the proper action of our Parliament, and the sanction of our King.

There was just the trouble. Reformation from within would take time, perhaps several generations, perhaps several centuries. Could they afford to wait, deprived of a true Church, and a sincere, intelligible and helpful manner of worship? It was very important to remain loyal citizens to their beloved England, obedient to her laws, and co-operative to her concerted efforts to reform. But there was something more important—their own souls, their own standing in the sight of Almighty God.

Just then a thoughtful young Puritan minister stepped into his modest notoriety. His name was Robert Browne. "My Friends," he said, in effect, "read your New Testament; read the words of Christ himself: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Can't you see? There is Christ's formula for an authentic Christian Church; no Papal Dispensation, no Established Church of which you must be a part, no Act of Parliament, no royal sanction. But religion is nothing unless it is first of all a personal matter. There may be but two or three; but gather yourselves together in Christ's name, under a covenant that definitely states your intention to be a Church, and you are automatically a church. Christ himself is your fellow-member. Of course you will be despised, hated and persecuted. Neither King nor state will approve your action, because you will be independent, separated from them. But Christ will approve, and you cannot ask more than that.

A handful of the poorer and more desperate of the Puritans were convinced by Robert Browne's argument; whereupon a new watchword came at once into use: "Reformation without tarrying for any." It would require courage to carry out this plan, for they would be despised by their fellow-Puritans, and punished by the law of the land. But it was better to suffer the persecutions of earth than to forfeit their heaven. A little Separatist Church was gathered according to Browne's method in London; another in Gainsborough. Both were forced to flee to Holland, where they soon disintegrated because of internal dissensions.

Our interest focusses on a third Separatist church gathered at Scrooby in 1603. We know the story too well to require repetition. We have often followed them through their trials in Scrooby, their escape to Holland, their eleven years at Leyden, and their memorable two-months' voyage to Cape Cod. We have no hesitation in saying they were the bravest, sincerest, most faithful to their religious professions, and most determined company of people that have ever come to human attention.

During that first winter in Plymouth half their number died of scurvy, but they never flinched. On a day in April, 1621, the *Mayflower* shook out her mildewed sails and prepared to return to England. Any of the Company who wanted to give it all up and go back to the comforts of dear old England could do so. Not a single soul took advantage of that chance. During that first

Spring, through the good offices of their loyal Indian friends. Samoset, Squanto, and Hobomac, they made a treaty of friendship and peace with the chieftain Massasoit. That treaty remained in force for fifty years, and was never infringed by either party.

All through that summer of 1621 they labored incessantly building their houses, gathering firewood, learning how to raise corn, and dig clams, and gather oysters and lobsters; and when harvest time came in September they found they had a great store of Indian corn, their pease were not worth gathering, their barley was indifferent good, and meanwhile the harbor was full of ducks, and the ponds of wild geese; the woods were teeming with turkeys and deer. Things looked more hopeful.

A spontaneous mood of relaxation and contentment came over them. They indulged that mood. A group of Indians including Massasoit were their guests, and they spent a day or two in feasting and games. That little recess has won general acceptance as the First Thanksgiving Day. As we think it over we have to conclude that their thanksgivings were prompted more by their spiritual than by their material blessings. But that is wholly as it should be. Their foremost thought was that God had not forgotten them. His everlasting arms were still underneath.

The nearest they ever came to boasting was when one of their number referred to the entire company as "The Lord's Free People." That innocent-sounding title had required of them supreme courage, unbending integrity, and faultless obedience — soul-and-body obedience — to God's will. They felt, and we agree, that they had fairly earned the title; they were the Lord's Free People.

Those words ring in our ears with a kind of splendor. They formulate a lofty ideal wholly typical of Thanksgiving Day. For every successive Thanksgiving Day seems to whisper to us: True, you live in a day of darkness, in a generation of confusion and bewilderment; yet I offer you, as my choicest blessing, the privilege of earning by your courage, your integrity, your moral consistency, the title which your forefathers earned and never forfeited: the Lord's Free People. Other blessings come and go. Now they are many, and now they are few. This blessing will never fail you: the privilege of loving and trusting your God, learning his truth, and possessing his freedom.

Richard Roe to John Doe

Dear John,

I wince when you ask three posers in your first paragraph. I question your good taste in asking them for they involve comparisons, and comparisons are either odious or odorous, I can never remember which; let us say they are both.

1. What is a Unitarian?

2. How does a Unitarian differ from an Orthodox?

3. What advantage does he gain by being a Unitarian?

The Unitarian is the man who keeps his mind open, his powers of observation active and accurate, his judgment healthy and balanced and sane, and who comes to his definite conclusions with a sort of diffidence, as one who cannot forget that his best conclusinon may be a wrong one.

I admit we do not like dogmas. They too easily assume a factitious importance and turn into tyrants, and by their brute-force authority prevent the mind from functioning.

Most of us, however, do make a single exception. We agree with Whittier:

Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings:
I know that God is good.

That one fixed stake, the last and biggest and most important stake of all, is as indispensable to us as it was to Whittier. We find it necessary to have such a stake, and to cling to it. You may, if you wish, tell us that such a stake is really a dogma, and that in clinging to it we are acting just like any dogmatist. We prefer to call it our basic Life-hypothesis, and that in clinging to it we are simply doing what every human being has done, is doing, and will do forever and ever.

Our line of reasoning is something like this: every human soul is an individual. Individuality is uniqueness, a type consisting of a solitary member. No individual can live his full and true life within the limits of that solitariness. At his birth he enters the world with that inherent, built-in craving to do something about his solitariness, as Whitehead says. Attach it to something stronger than himself. When the Psalmist says: Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, he is voicing that fundamental all-powerful instinct. It would seem then that Augustine was right: Thou hast fashioned us for thyself, and our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee. We are conditioned at birth with that dependence on a something greater to which we can attach our solitariness and derive safety and sustenance. Augustine calls that something

greater than self, God. And the term God carries exactly as many shades of meaning as there are living souls in the world at the moment.

All this is corroborated by our own observation. We notice that when a man is forced by circumstances to live with his own solitariness unattached, a spiritual maverick, he usually suffers some degree of mental derangement. We notice that when a soul attaches its solitariness to an hypothetical God and lives as if there is a God, the result is pretty sure to be a tranquil, ordered, useful life. We notice that when a man proclaims himself an atheist, the first thing he does is hunt up five or six other atheists and organize a society, something bigger than any one of them, to which each one may attach himself; thereby giving the lie to their own professions of atheism.

Now, the evolutionist tells us that the adaptations of the creature are caused by the peculiarities of his environment and are good proof of the nature of that environment. Ducks could never have developed web feet in a waterless world. Giraffes could never have evolved their long necks in a treeless world. Dear Lord, thou couldst never have fashioned us for thyself in a Godless world, but only in one where thou art the Eternal Reality. Whittier could never have become adapted to the need of clinging to his one fixed stake if there were no fixed stake to cling to in his spiritual environment.

You can see that our agreement with Whittier is more than a dogmatism, more even than an hypothesis. It is an indication that we have our share of the universal instinct to belong to something bigger than ourselves, and that we are doing our best, as everybody else is doing, to obey that instinct. We see the need of definite conclusions, specific beliefs, particular loyalties as clearly as you do. But we cannot forget that such things are the result of something greater and more important, which is the open mind, the fair and balanced judgment, the right spirit which produce them. Therefore we hold our definite beliefs in a tentative sort of way, as though always on probation (which they are), serviceable only so long as they can command the sanction of our minds.

To sum it up then, the Unitarian is the man who harbors the intuitive belief that there is a body of truth to be known, and that its acquisition is of the utmost importance, because Human life can never be a success until mankind can live it with the knowledge and actual guidance of this truth. Obedience to the truth is the condition of successful human living.

Man gains his knowledge of truth by a careful observation and analysis of his past experience; and sometimes by unaccountable flashes of insight that show him the truth without the process of reason. It is a long, laborious process, saddened by oceans of human tears, enlivened by gales of human laughter, and complicated by variant opinions as to just what constitutes a happy or a tragic result. For we judge all candidates for truth by their results: true if those results are happy, false if the results are tragic. But there are so many cases where the same result will be happy for some people and tragic for others. Watch the bleachers at a baseball game. "Be ye all of one mind," says St. Peter. Assuming that he means be ye all of one mind as to just what is true and beautiful and good, we could wish that Peter might speak up today. If Russia and America could agree on the final desirable objective, the cold war would cease in ten minutes.

From all this you will understand why the Unitarian tries to keep his mind open, his judgment fair, balanced and sane; and why he is so hesitant in the presence of all categorical statements and dogmatic assertions. He knows that he does not know enough to be a dogmatist. His convictions are temporary, as of the moment; his assumptions are hypothetical. He therefore does his work and lives his life in faith. You will find more faith in the typical Unitarian heart than in all the dogmatists in town. Remember what Tennyson says:

> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Now John, Old Boy, I must continue this boredom a little longer. Your second question is: How does the Unitarian differ from the Orthodox? He differs right here while we are at it; he differs in his idea of truth, what it is, and how acquired. To him truth is nothing to be sought and gradually learned by men. It is something revealed to them, by an act of God, and prompted by his loving-kindness. The Old Testament is God's first revelation of truth. It did not work too well; whereupon God saw his error and supplemented his first revelation by a second, called the New Testament. The two together make up the Holy Bible, God's complete revelation of all truth. The Orthodox sets up a flat-footed peremptory dogma: The Holy Bible is God's perfect revelation of all truth. Take it, and heaven is your reward; leave it, and hell is your punishment.

The Unitarian differs from the Orthodox in two other important points, first, in the concept of Jesus. The Orthodox begins by thinking of Jesus as the Christ of God, God's Messenger, Special Agent, Emissary to earth to fulfill a special function; then as the Only Begotten Son of God, the rest of us being the sons and daughters of the Evil One. Then, as an emanation from the fulness, the Pleroma, of the God-head, the Word of God made flesh and sent to dwell among

us, full of grace and truth. Then, as a Creation of the Triune God, the other being the Holy Ghost, made of a substance not identical with the substance of God, but similar. Finally, as full God; but God in the mode, or phase, or aspect of the Son, the second member of the God-head, each member of which is in all respects equal to the other two, Very God of Very God.

The Unitarian can see no profit in such ambitious speculations, and therefore no reason for them. Life is life which generates, and many-seeming life is one. God is Life, its source and perfect manifestation. Life has many manifestations, all through the scale of being. From the amoeba floating on its stagnant pool, up through the various kingdoms until it reaches its earthly glory in "Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain, the Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain." These forms differ greatly, but the differences are not in kind, but in degree. All belong in one and the same category, the category of living things, the God-category, for God himself is a member, the summit and source of the whole.

Another way in which the Unitarian differs from the Orthodox is a way hard for us to understand, and even harder to forgive. The Orthodox bases his Christianity on the Gospel of John. Any New Testament scholar will tell us that the Gospel of John can claim no historical dignity, and is a decidedly wobbly foundation on which to erect a Christian Religion. There is no certainty as to its authorship, where, when, why, by whom it was written. The surmise is that it dates anywhere between a.d. 110, and 140, at least twenty years after the last of the Synoptics was written. It seems obvious that it was a deliberate piece of propaganda, to help hellenize this new and popular Christianity. It entirely disregards the chronology and frame-work of events which Matthew, Mark, and Luke faithfully follow. It depicts Jesus as a figure which we cannot recognize as the Jesus of Nazareth whom we know from the Synoptics.

What bothers us most is the difference in the teachings of the two. The Christ of John's Gospel consistently denies any connection with humanity. He is not of this world, but only sent down to this world on a special mission of salvation; and when his mission is accomplished he will go back whither no man can follow him. He claims for himself not only eternal existence (before Abraham was I am), but also identity with God (the Father and I are one). He is the Door, the true Shepherd. Faith in him is man's only chance of salvation; and only those whom God selects will be able to have this faith in him. In short, in the Christ of John we can recognize the very postulates on which John Calvin built his Five Points, fourteen centuries later: Absolute Predestination, Total Depravity, Particular Election, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. And he affects us in much the same way as Calvin did.

Can you imagine Jesus of Nazareth making such claims, saying such things, leaving such an impression? We have here two distinct types of Christianity, irreconcilable, and mutually exclusive. One is fictitious, a mass of words deliberately attributed to Jesus (who would have repudiated every word). The other is the most authentic form of Christianity we have, recorded in the three earlier and more reliable Gospels, by men who had no theological axe to grind. You choose the John type; we prefer the Synoptic type; and it is hard to understand why you do not also. You may, if you wish, define Unitarianism as the attempt to reconstruct from the Synoptic Gospels the religion which Jesus personally held and practiced, and tried to teach his followers. We believe there is room for it in the world today. Love God with all your might and main; and make that love the incentive and the guide for every thought, judgment, problem, choice, hope, word, and act of your daily life. And as for total human depravity, man's inability to earn his own salvation, the need of vicarious atonement, the jealous, vindictive, unforgiving God of implacable justice who must be approached with fear and trembling—I venture to say that you will find not a whisper of all that in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

What advantage is gained by the Unitarian?

First: the advantage of a religion that never loses its flexibility. It is never handicapped by obsolete dogmas hanging like millstones around its neck. It is always up-to-date, always applicable to the needs of the day, because it deals with eternal principles, not with short-lived theological fads.

Second: The advantage of worshipping a worshipable God, a Father in Heaven who is at least as loving, tender-hearted, understanding, forgiving, patient, hopeful and proud as the best of earthly fathers.

Third: The advantage of having a Leader to follow who is in all respects one of us, included in our human bracket, who said nothing, did nothing, was nothing that we cannot say, do, and be; a representative man; a stock sample of Homo Sapiens at his best; who teaches us to know ourselves, respect ourselves; and to be worthy of God's pride, share his purpose and his hope, and serve him with a joyous elation.

Semper con amore,

RICHARD ROE